Canadian FILM WEEKLY

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OUR BUSINESS by N.A. Taylor

What Do You Say To An Irate Lady?

Not only is a large segment of the public confounded by the type of entertainment which a number of theatres are exhibiting today, but so are many theatre owners and managers. In the down town area of larger cities the situation is not particularly acute. However, in suburban areas and more particularly in small, one theatre towns, the manager may often find himself the target of unhappy and discontented patrons who resent the new type of permissiveness in many movies.

What does an honest and conscientious theatre manager say to an irate lady when she complains about films containing too much sex and displaying an excess of nudity, etc.? Doug Whitham, the levelheaded and conscientious manager of the Geneva Theatre in Orillia, Ont. (population 20,000) seems to have come up with a very good answer which is couched in terms similar to this: "Madame, we are forced to operate our theatres today in the same manner as our public library. There you will find every type and variety of reading from "Peter Pan" to "Rabelais". You take your choice. Producers make films which they hope will sell tickets. If currently the public is buying sex oriented films, that is what they will make. At such time as the public shows a greater preference for family type films, these will predominate."

Perhaps this doesn't tell the whole story but it is certainly rational and sensible. It is a soft answer and it may turn away wrath. It would be wonderful if the public always responded to the type of films which theatre owners and bookers enjoy. Unfortunately, we are living through a period when this is more and more unlikely to happen. However, as stated in a previous article, overhead is a

(Continued on Page 2)

Everything's coming up roses for Famous Players

In its 50th annual report to shareholders, Famous Players Canadian Corp. Ltd. revealed that consolidated net earnings for 1969 were $5,856,230 as compared with consolidated net earnings of $4,585,190 for 1968. The net earnings for 1969 include extraordinary income of $1,115,480, being the gain on the sale of the company's 50% interest in Associated Broadcasting Corp. Ltd. Net earnings per share on the 7,178,288 common shares outstanding in 1969 were 82¢, compared with 66¢ earned on the 6,948,288 common shares outstanding in 1968.

Capital outlays for new properties and facilities in 1969 were $10,899,224, compared with $4,752,877 expended in 1968. Theatre outlays in 1969 were $7,370,036, and communication division outlays were $3,529,188. The exceedingly high level of additions to fixed assets in 1969, together with the further investment of almost $5,500,000 in subsidiary companies, led to a decrease in working capital of approximately $1,500,000. The working capital position will be improved during 1970 as the cash proceeds arising from the sale of the communication division comes into the company's treasury.

Dividends paid in 1969 amounted to $2,781,587 as compared with $2,301,620 paid in 1968: based on shares outstanding, this represents a 17% increase in per share dividends in 1969 over those of 1968. In the 1968 report, shareholders' retained earnings amounted to $26,038,710 as compared with $32,628,054 at the end of 1969: the increase of $6,589,344 results from retention of 1969 earnings of $3,074,643 and recognizing in 1969 the company's share in undistributed earnings of 50%-owned companies, amounting to $3,514,701.

At year-end, Famous Players' theatres totalled 347, comprised of 297 indoor theatres and 50 drive-ins, an increase of 17 over 1968. Of these, 214 were in the company's consolidated group, the remainder being theatres in which it shared financial interest with its partners.

High hopes for new sound-camera system

Synctrol, the new Columbia Cableless Synchronized Sound-Camera System, is being used on location for the first time on Columbia Pictures' Kane, starring Sidney Poitier.

An invention of Hal Landaker, assistant head of Columbia's Sound Department, with the help of the company's camera department, the new system is expected to revolutionize the motion picture industry. Requiring only a two-man crew, the Synctrol will completely streamline the production operation, cutting time and costs.

In operation, the new camera motor and sound unit are coupled together by a radio controller, making a set-up which operates with equal facility on a sound stage or on location. The recording unit (minus the new control) has been in operation at Columbia and Screen Gems for the past three years on all feature and television productions. With the addition of the new component parts the system, previously restricted to sound stage activity, may be used anywhere.

The new camera drive is a d.c. only motor, powered by a 48-volt battery pack weighing approximately 30 lbs. This pack is hand carried by the camera crew and kept near the camera. The sound

(Continued on Page 3)

1st Montreal drive-in hopes to open soon

The first drive-in theatre in Montreal could be in operation by July. It is designed to accommodate 1,200 cars and will be completely hard-topped, appropriately landscaped, and surrounded by high fencing. A playground area for children will also be included.

The suburban site of Dollard Des Ormeaux has been approved by the town council, and the rezoning bylaw permitting construction of the "Cine-Park" must now be okayed by the property owners in the sector. The proposed 20-acre site is located in Montreal's industrial area. The project must also be approved by the Quebec Department of Cultural Affairs.

The development proposed by United Amusement Corp. Ltd., Montreal, wholly-owned by Famous Players Canadian Corp., would feature a main administration building with restaurant facilities and would operate on a year-round basis.

Cdn Cancer Society sponsors short film

A new ten-minute film by the Canadian Cancer Society dealing with one of its most successful research projects is now being distributed to theatres throughout Canada, in both English and French. The film, called The Flower, tells of the discovery in 1958 of a drug called VLB (vincaleukoblastine) which is still one of the most effective means of fighting Hodgkin's disease, or cancer of the lymph glands.

James A. Cowan, chairman of the national public information committee of the Canadian Cancer Society, said that The Flower was part of the society's current program to convince the public of the truth in the slogan, "Cancer can be beaten". He said that it informs the public of a Canadian achievement and indicates the type of success which their donations have made possible.

"This whole industry is painfully under-researched. They aren't even testing the effectiveness of the media to see if we are getting the best for our money." It was the **Warner Brothers** vice-president of advertising and publicity worldwide, **Daniel Stern,** as quoted in the **New York Times** of March 6.

A few months ago, **Cue** magazine, **New York's** entertainment weekly, conducted an extensive and intensive reader survey. The object was to discover some of the changing views of today's movie audiences — the average moviegoer researched by Cue was a young adult who goes to the movies three times each month.

The respondents revealed some interesting bits of information which should be of interest to exhibitors, distributors and producers alike. Of the total, 60% prefer small theatres to large; 65% want single rather than double features; 44% felt that higher ticket prices kept them from more movie-going; 67% felt that waiting in line was the big annoyance; 15% were willing to make advance reservations; 33% thought that stars were "important"; 80% read two or more critics regularly; 39% are influenced often; 47% are influenced occasionally; a smaller percentage are immune altogether to critical opinion; 70% still prefer American films to foreign; 60% want to see their foreign films with original soundtrack intact and with English subtitles; 83% preferred colour films; 59% like wide screen pictures; 75% don't mind the trend toward "freer language" in films; 67% don't object to film nudity; 45% don't object to the depiction of sexual relations on the screen; 75% do not use the classification code as a guiderule; 60% approve of the code; 50% feel that there should be more censorship supervision; 50% feel there is too much violence in films (nothing seems to have been mentioned about too much sex); Gone With The Wind was the "favourite film."

The changing patterns are (or ought to be) evident to everyone connected with the mechanism of the motion picture industry. Cue magazine has made some effort to put them into proper perspective, but that is not enough.

It is time that exhibitors, distributors and producers put their houses in order (and as **Leo Jaffe,** president of **Columbia Pictures Industries** says), "clean out the barnacles that have accumulated over the years, structure our companies in keeping with the times — in a manner that will not only enable us to survive, but in opinion, will enable us to develop and progress in a healthy manner" . . .

view from the topp

By GARY TOPP

Loving is an intelligent and sympathetic look at a man trying to keep himself together, a magazine illustrator who is bored by his wife, his children, his job and who is mistrusted by his young mistress.

George Segal as the commuting New York commercial artist and **Eva Marie Saint** as his wife are drowning in mutual shame and humiliation, and share a complicity for the sweet life of suburbia. The two protagonists are very ably supported by **Sterling Hayden's** plutocrat and **Keenan Wynn's** grubby agent.

Irvin Kershner's (The Hoodlum Priest, The Luck Of Ginger Coffey, A Fine Madness, The Film Flam Man) perfect direction builds unexpected scene upon unexpected scene, tracing the artist's mediocrity through the tools of his own trade, acknowledging that a man's job might well be more than passing importance in the living of his life and showing that a lot of energy is required to keep a loving relationship in focus. Loving is a **Columbia Pictures'** release.

Also from **Columbia** is an animated film (14 minutes) by a **Czech** film-artist, produced at the **National Film Board.** Entitled **To See Or Not To See,** it shows that you can stare down your worst fears if you only wear the right glasses and it gives a clear view of what your inner self really looks like. (Actually he looks just like you, only smaller and more scared.) Exhibitors might be interested in this delightful little film as it would be a pleasant departure from the usual out-of-date travelogues and the silly cartoons that we are accustomed to and tired of watching before the main feature.

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"The greatest number of admissions in any city anywhere in the world in the history of the motion picture industry. In the first 17 days, over 440,000 people in the city of **Paris** have seen **Borsalino.** (more people than attended the Woodstock Music Festival)." So read a recent ad in Variety for **Paramount's** new release starring **Jean-Paul Belmondo** and **Alain Delon.** Borsalino is a big-scale gangster movie concerning the Marseilles underworld milieu of the '30's . . . **Arthur Hailey's** best-selling novel, **Airport,** has been converted into a $10 million movie for **Universal Pictures.** Similar to **Paramount's The Adventurers,** Airport has received a mixed collection of critical reactions and a socko-whammo box-office return. In New York, the **Daily News** gave the film a four-star rating and called it "a thriller" with "suspense galore". The **New York Times** accused it of being hopelessly old-fashioned and "immensely silly" but added that "it will probably entertain millions of people who no longer care very much about movies." My own reaction was that Airport is no more than a very costly 'B-movie' — not much suspense but extremely entertaining (perhaps for the wrong reasons). It has what some might describe as an all-star cast including **Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Jean Seberg, Van Heflin, George Kennedy, Barbara Hale, Jacqueline Bisset and Hellen Hayes,** making it the biggest production in terms of finance, in the 57-year history of the **Universal** studio. At a **Universal** press luncheon in New York, producer **Ross Hunter** remarked, "I made **Airport** in the hope that it would bring back the 'movie-movie' to the screen. The studio chiefs have been shouting that no picture should be made today unless it costs less than $2 million, or unless it's aimed at the teenage market, or unless it is filled with pornography and nudity and excessive violence. I'm very much against all this, and I'm standing up for what I believe. I think we are underestimating the teenager. And the so-called adult audience has largely stopped going to the movies because there are so few pictures for adults. All types of movies should be made. My pictures are being made to get back the mass audience." He seems to be succeeding admirably . . . Sorry to **Gil Taylor** for calling his movie **Flick It** — it should be **Flick.** As I missed the opening credits of the film, I was under the impression that the newspaper ads suggested the correct title. Gil says that the "Flick It" in the papers were only catch lines . . . **Vilgot Sjoman,** director of **I Am Curious, Yellow** explains his idea of what pornography "Pornography titillates. It points at one thing, sex, to the exclusion of the rest of the picture. The people are not human beings in pornography. Usually you get to know very little about them. This combination of titillation and isolation belongs to pornography."

An interesting question was posed in **Variety** — Where does a censor go when he retires from censoring?

Fox begins major revival program

One of the major scandals of film has been the systematic neglect of some of the studios in preserving old films. Prior to 1948, all films were made of nitrate stock. It was discovered that nitrate film had a life of roughly 25 years, depending upon storage conditions. Nitrate disintegrates into powder. Films literally become dust.

Acetate stock replaced nitrate in 1948. Films on acetate are said to have a life of 400 years. In recent years, a process was developed whereby it was possible to transfer a nitrate film to acetate, making it possible to preserve permanently all pre-1948 films. But it is a very costly process, in the vicinity of $6,000 to $7,000 for an average feature film.

20th Century-Fox has recently reached into its vaults and has selected a revival of several of their films — nitrate-to-acetate prints. Some of the films are representative works of some of the more interesting films of the early American sound cinema. They are rarely seen works by John Ford (How Green Was My Valley), Erich von Stroheim (Hello Sister), F. W. Murnau (Sunrise), Ernst Lubitsch (Cluny Brown), Preston Sturges (The Power And The Glory), Howard Hawks (The Road To Glory), Frank Borzage (Seventh Heaven), Raoul Walsh (Me And My Gal), Rowland Brown (Quick Millions) and others.

If this series is successful (at the New Yorker Theatre in New York), it is hoped that Fox and perhaps some other studios will open their vaults wider.

Variety Village receives donations

Last Saturday, the Circus Wagon Restaurant in Toronto donated all the gross proceeds for the day to Variety Village. This was to celebrate the climax of the restaurant's grand opening.

Our Business

(Continued from Page 1)

continuing and inexorable obligation and theatre owners must, in the long run, stay in the black or go out of business.

The world today is in turmoil in many areas and in many ways. Motion pictures have always been, to some degree, a reflection of current happenings. Anyone who is not aware of the great upheavals in our society has been living in isolation. No one can predict the change of events in the next few years. In the meantime, theatre managers must try to speak softly and soothingly to irate patrons.

IT'S MY BAG

By Ed Hocura

QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS: Why would the distributors of **Z** allow the news to be announced that they had sold the television rights to the best foreign film of the year to **ABC-TV**? Especially when the film has yet to be shown in theatres outside of the key cities? . . . Is **MGM** wise in cutting 27 minutes out of **Goodbye, Mr. Chips** for its general release engagements? And why do they feel that removing the musical sequences will give the film greater boxoffice potential as a straight dramatic love story? . . . Is there an exhibitor in Canada with enough interest in films made in this country willing to gamble playing **Explosion** and **Flick** on a double bill? And would the **Canadian Film Development Corporation** agree to co-finance advertising costs to promote what I feel would be a dandy package of action and sex for the drive-in crowd? . . . Is the reason **Barry Carnon** hasn't been around the office lately talking about **Universal** product because he's kept too busy at the office adding up the fantastic grosses for **Airport** and **Anne Of The Thousand Days?** . . . And speaking of publicity types, that was a mean trick **Mickey Stevenson** of **National General Pictures** pulled in hiring **Rita Harris** as publicity gal for his company. Doesn't he know I'm a sucker for blondes? . . . When will **Alex Stewart** of the **Motion Picture Institute** get the appreciation he deserves for his efforts in getting so much in the way of free plugs for movies on Toronto radio stations? . . . Is it true (as my fellow colleague **Gary Topp** insists it is) that a lot of the young people who really want to see **Warner Bros. Woodstock** just can't afford the three bucks it costs to see the musical documentary that was made for them? . . . What does master showman **Joe Levine** have up his sleeve for the trade luncheon planned for Thursday of this week? Not a hint did he give in the invitation mailed from his New York office . . . Will the aborted moon shot of last week give **Columbia's Marooned** credit for alerting people to the perils of space flights? . . . Why are the people who don't believe in trade paper advertising the same ones who go out of their way to send duplicate news releases of their company activities? . . . And are they aware of the fact that it is cheaper to run a trade paper ad than it would be to mail their sales message to every one of their customers?

* * *

LOOKING BACK: It was a year ago this week that **Peter S. Myers** said goodbye to his friends and business associates in Toronto and headed for New York. During the past 12 months, Myers moved up the ladder from being general sales manager for **20th Century-Fox** to vice-president, distribution. The quick promotion was due to Myers' keen knowledge and business acumen, a fact reflected by the announcement that 20th Century-Fox is the only major studio with its 1971 release schedule all mapped out. **Peter S. Myers** believes in letting exhibitors know that his company has no intention of getting into a product bind . . . It was a year ago this week that **Jackie Gleason** showed the people of Quebec City why he is regarded as Miami's ambassador of goodwill. His three-week stay was far from being a holiday trip; he was there to film scenes for **Don't Drink The Water,** with Quebec City chosen as the ideal place to duplicate the mythical country of Vulgaria. Having seen **Don't Drink The Water** when I was in New York last fall, I'm at a loss to know why the comedy has yet to be released in Canada. It's the kind of film that should be welcomed by exhibitors looking for something to attract the family trade . . . It was two years ago this month that **Walter Pidgeon** came to Toronto to publicize **Columbia's Funny Girl,** in which he portrayed the late Flo Ziegfeld. Pidgeon amazed everyone he met with the zest and exuberance he displayed on a gruelling cross-country tour. But Pidgeon took it all in his stride. The former native of St. John, N.B. is approaching his 73rd birthday and has no intention of retiring . . . It was two years ago this month that **Roger Smith** came to Toronto and created a stir when he announced that he would use Canadian actors and locales for **The Beginners.** But the actor-producer didn't foresee the problems that were to lie ahead. He fired the film's original director shortly after production got underway, he couldn't get **United Artists** to accept his new title for the film **(You Don't Need Pyjamas at Rosie's)** and his leading lady **(Jacqueline Bisset)** gave him a giant-sized headache with her tantrums. All in all, **The First Time** failed to live up to **Roger Smith's** expectations as something to make people forget that he could do something other than go through life as **Ann-Margaret's** husband. But he's still playing it safe in his next production. His wife will be the star.

* * *

Not for one moment have I ever believed that what people see on television or in movies has any effect on their behavior. So I don't accept the belief of some people that violence in movies creates violence on the streets, on the campus, or in the living room and boudoir. Most of us carry a little violence in our personalities. Otherwise, how can a decent young man be conditioned to kill human beings in a war, and especially in a war that they or us don't understand? But the majority of people are law-abiding. And most people prefer to run away from a fight rather than initiate one. If it were otherwise, then we would be back in the stone age — only with machine guns instead of clubs. Everytime I read that motion pictures have contributed to the violence in the country, I say to myself, "How can it be proved?" Movies have always been blamed for a country's social illnesses. But if movies are supposed to affect bad behavior, why doesn't the good in some of them rub off on viewers? Why don't people become more religious after seeing **The Ten Commandments** or **The Bible?** Why don't people become more loving after seeing **Charly** and **The Christmas Tree?** It is my feeling that movies are all things to all people. Those that are exceptional attract more patronage than those with less entertainment. Box-office figures prove this. Can it be proved that the crime rate in the U.S. and Canada increased after the showings of **In Cold Blood, The Dirty Dozen** and **Bonnie and Clyde?** You'll have to ask yourself if these films made you feel any differently about breaking the law as a way of earning a living. My argument against violence in films, just as my argument against nudity has always been, is that it can become extremely boring. If war films continue to be made, violence has to be depicted as it exists in war. If nudity has to be shown, then there is no reason it can't be done in silhouette — instead of dumping a nude couple right in your lap. A serious, valid test of the relationship between social behavior and films would have to be conducted over a period of years to prove that some films are harmful to impressionable viewers. But no one seems concerned enough to launch such a study. None of this business about blaming the sex and violence in today's films for corrupting our children is anything startlingly new. I've been hearing about it ever since I grew up in the toughest district in Hamilton. And the only difference today is that no one has the answers for the many social problems prevalent today, so why not blame it all on movies? It's always the easy way out!

High hopes

(Continued from Page 1)

unit, which has no need for constant monitoring, may be as far away as several hundred feet.

When the switch is turned on by the cameraman, a synchronizing signal is immediately transmitted, via radio, to a receiver in the sound recording unit. This signal starts the recorder. Three seconds later, the control unit in the camera operates a film-fogging device, and simultaneously transmits a 300-cycle signal to the receiver. This signal is then injected into the audio circuit of the recorder to give an automatic start mark. At the end of the scene, when the camera switch is turned off, the absence of a synchronizing signal at the receiver shuts off the recorder and applies a sub-audible tone to signify the end of the shot.

Speed control is an integral part of the motor and necessitates putting a switch in either the 24-frame or wild position. The wild position is used for under-cranked and/or over-speed shots. Speed accuracy in this new unit is of such foolproof order as to require no attention on the part of the personnel involved.

The recorder, holding more than 10,000 camera feet of tape, requires no reloading during a full day's shooting, and no one is needed to continually monitor the tape. The unit is adaptable to any motion-picture camera now in professional use — either mounted or hand-held.

By eliminating the need for constant supervision, reloading, resynchronizing and the tangle of sound cables in use under current systems, the new Columbia Synctrol system is providing superiority under actual working conditions on two major productions.

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